

“THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE”**NO. 2608****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1899****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1883**

*“The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:
for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

Romans 3:22-23

THE apostle here says that “there is no difference,” yet he does not mean that all men are alike in all respects. There are very many and important variations among men. It would be quite untrue and unjust to say that there are no differences of character even among unregenerate men, for there certainly are many varieties and gradations of sinners.

There are some who have, as it were, sold themselves to work iniquity and there are others who have, apparently, kept the commandments of God from their youth up. There are some who delight in all manner of evil and there are others who, though they are not converted, hate the very mention of all the grosser vices and steer clear of such impurity.

There are some people, who are not yet on the Lord’s side, who are like that rich young man of whom it is said that when Christ looked upon him, He loved him, for He saw much in him that was admirable. And on the other hand, there are some who are manifestly sons of perdition, like Judas, of whom our Lord said that he was a devil. All men are not demons or demoniacal. All are not equally hardened in heart. All do not go to the same excess of riot. So when Paul said, “There is no difference,” he did not mean that there are no differences of outward character.

Let us not be carried away with the idea that it does not matter what our outward character is. It does matter a great deal. It shall be found, at the last, that the greatly guilty shall be greatly punished. “That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.” God is not unjust. Even in taking vengeance upon His adversaries, He strictly observes justice at all times. It is for your good and for the good of those about you that you should be moral, and temperate, and chaste, and honest, and God grant that you may be all that!

There are, then, differences of character among men, and there are, no doubt, differences of disposition which show themselves very early. Some children appear from the very first to be tender and docile, while others manifest a passionate and rebellious disposition. All of us probably know some friends who are not yet converted, but they are amiable, loving, considerate, kind. They have almost everything we could wish except the one thing needful. God grant that they may soon have that also!

Though as yet they are not brought to Christ’s feet, they seem to have had a religious tendency from their very childhood and they delight to be found in the house of God, and at least externally in the ways of God, even if their hearts are not at present renewed by grace. There are, alas! others whose dispositions are the very reverse of all this. They seem disposed to everything that is bad.

We have met with cases in godly families, where young men, from the first moment in which they could have their liberty, have delighted to do that which at last broke their parents’ hearts. They have seemed to be, from the very first, fickle, vain, fond of pleasure, proud, willful, and wicked. Beyond all question, there are differences of disposition in different persons. And when Paul says, “There is no difference,” he does not refer either to character or to disposition.

There are also in men who as yet are not saved, differences as to their readiness to receive the Word. There are some who are like the “honest and good ground,” which is already ploughed and harrowed—all that is wanting is the handful of good seed, and as soon as it is sown, they will take it in and in due time yield a harvest in return.

Others are like the stony-ground hearers—apparently ready and prepared for the good seed. They seem to receive the Word with joy, but as the hard rock underneath has never been broken up and there has been no subsoil ploughing, nothing permanent results from their hearing the Gospel message. There are others, again, who are like the hard-trodden highway—you may sow upon them as much seed as you like, but the only result will be to feed the birds. The fowls of the air will devour whatever is scattered upon them. May none of us be hearers of that sort!

So you see, dear friends, that there are great differences among men in certain respects. The apostle is speaking in this passage about one thing and you must not stretch his meaning beyond that. There is one point in which there is no difference and that is that “all have sinned.” All have forfeited every claim to personal righteousness, all must be made righteous by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them, and all who would have that righteousness must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is one way of salvation, and only one, and whatever other differences there may be, there is no difference about this matter. If we are saved at all, we must all be saved in one way.

My discourse is to run upon these lines. First, *let us enlarge upon the doctrine* that, in the matter of the Gospel and of salvation, “There is no difference.” Secondly, *let us show its practical bearing upon ourselves*, and then, thirdly, *let me rejoice in the doctrine*—let our hearts sing over it, for there is the raw material of many a holy song and psalm within these few words, “There is no difference.”

I. First, then, LET US ENLARGE UPON THIS DOCTRINE and in so doing, we will make four observations.

The first is this, *there is no difference as to the message of salvation which is to be delivered to men*. It may be my privilege, at one time, to speak to a convocation of highly-intelligent well-educated men. If so, I am to preach to them the Gospel of salvation by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, it has often been a great joy to me to preach to assemblies which certainly were not composed of the learned and great, but were gathered from the lowest class of the people. How glad I have been to preach to them! And I had exactly the same message to deliver to them as to the other congregation, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

If the true preacher of Christ were called to preach before a pit full of kings—as Napoleon once said to a noted singer, “If you will come to me, you shall sing before a pit full of kings”—if it were the preacher’s business to address such an audience as that, he must preach nothing but, “Believe and live.” And if he were called to speak before an assembly of murderers about to die, the very scum of the earth, he could have no more suitable or appropriate message than this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

Go where you may, my dear brother, you need not puzzle your head about the sort of Gospel you are bound to preach. To the jailor at Philippi, to the Areopagites on Mars’ Hill, to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, to Nero at Rome, to barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free, to the very chief of sinners, to the greatest or the least of mankind, you have to deliver but one message, “God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for sin, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.” This is the essence of the one message we have to deliver to all men. “There is no difference.”

And next, *there is no difference as to man’s need of this Gospel*. There are some, as we have already admitted, who have been preserved from gross vice, whose lives have been moral and upright, yet they have as much need of the Gospel as those who are confined in our jails or those who flaunt their unchastity in our public streets.

The Gospel comes to deal with sin and if a man has but one sin, he cannot get rid of that one sin apart from the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. But all men have not merely one sin, but many sins. They may not all be equally clear and manifest, some of them may be secret sins, but the secrecy of sin does not render it less sinful in the sight of God. There are no secrets from Him, He sees everything.

And whether sin be open or covert, whether it be less or more than that of other men, it needs the atoning sacrifice of Christ to remove it. The putting away of the sin of the most moral person who ever lived requires the propitiation of the Son of God. There is no bath that can take away a single stain of guilt except that—

*“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”*

All men have evil hearts, albeit their hearts may not all be equally inclined to the coarser vices in which some indulge, yet there is in every sinner the black spot of alienation from God, forgetfulness of God, love of sin, and dislike to God when He is thoroughly known. And to get this out of the heart requires a divine operation in every case.

No man can make his own heart clean. If it were possible for a man to change his arm or his foot, yet it would be clearly impossible for him to change his heart—that is so vital to himself that there cannot be a change there except He that made all hearts should make that heart anew. To change the heart of the most amiable maiden requires the work of the Spirit of God as truly as to change the heart of the most debauched wretch that lives.

It is no more possible for the honest man than for the practiced thief to make his heart right in the sight of God—it is equally impossible to either of them. Both cases are beyond human power and therefore the need of the work of the Spirit of God is the same. All of us at this moment either stand stripped naked before God, without a rag to cover us, or else we are wrapped in the glorious and resplendent righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The need of the Gospel is the same to every individual in the world. Those who are elevated above their fellow creatures do not stand on high before God—the Queen needs the grace of God to save her just as much as the poorest of her subjects. “There is no difference” as to the need of salvation.

Next, *this declaration is equally true as to the method of salvation.* The way in which men are saved is the same in every case. “There is no difference.” They do not all feel the same terrors, they do not all experience to the same extent the common joys. Each path is peculiar in some respects, yet there is but one road and that is the narrow way that leads unto life eternal.

The plan of salvation is this—that we do confess and acknowledge that our own righteousness is but filthy rags, that there is nothing in us that can merit anything of God, and next, that we apprehend that the Lord has put His dear Son into our place, has laid on Him our sin, and smitten Him with the strokes that ought to have fallen upon us. He, on His part, willingly becoming our Surety and Substitute. We must believe this if we would be saved.

That being done, we must accept what Christ has endured as being borne for us and trust in it with our whole hearts. We must, in fact, change places with Christ—let Him stand, as He did stand, and be reckoned as the sinner, that we might stand here and be looked upon by God as if we had been like His Son, perfectly righteous and without sin. He clothes Himself in our rags and He puts on us His royal robes. Faith appropriates to itself the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and so is clothed with what is called in our text, “the righteousness of God.”

God’s plan of salvation is a grand one and there is no other that can avail anybody in the whole world. This is the one way of life—that you do acknowledge yourself to be nothing and take Christ to be your All-in-all—that you, with your sin and misery, do, by a simple act of faith, take to yourself Christ to be your righteousness and your strength—and this being done, you are accepted in the Beloved, for now is it true of you that the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, is unto you and

upon you seeing that you have believed in Him. “There is no difference,” then, about the method of salvation.

Once more, *there is no difference as to the efficacy of the plan of salvation*. This man believed in Jesus Christ and was saved. So shall that other man be if he believes in Jesus Christ. All who believe in Christ are justified from all things. All who trust in Christ have eternal life and shall never perish. The blood of Jesus was never yet applied to a conscience without giving it peace.

A persecutor is washed and his crimson stains are gone. A thief believes and he is that day with Christ in Paradise. Mary Magdalene believes and seven devils are cast out of her. A rough Philippian jailor believes and that night he is baptized, rejoicing in God with all his house. Never sinner yet did try this blessed remedy and find it fail, and none ever shall, for “there is no difference.”

II. Now, in the second place, I want to TURN THIS TRUTH TO PRACTICAL ACCOUNT by showing its bearing upon us.

My first observation is *what a leveler this doctrine is for pride!* There is self-righteousness up there as a crown upon your forehead—it will have to come down, my friend. You are covered with the beautiful garments of your own good deeds. Take them off, brother, take them off. They are all without merit in the sight of God until you have trusted His Son.

All that you have done, and all that you think you have done, are only as so many cobwebs that must be swept away. There stands the gate through which the most fallen may enter and you must go through the same gate. There is no private path made for a gentleman like you. There is no royal road to heaven save only that one royal road which is opened for the very chief of sinners.

Down, Mr. Pride! Here is a man who is born of Christian parents and perhaps he has listened to the lying logic of the present age which says, “Children born of godly parents do not need conversion. There is something good in that by nature.” I tell you, sirs, that I begin to tremble for the children of pious parents, for I think that they are more likely to be deceived than any others.

They often fancy that they are converted when they are not and they get admitted into churches while they are unconverted. They are not like those who can see a great change in themselves through being taken right out of gross sin. They are very apt to be deceived and have need to be very careful lest they should make a fatal and eternal mistake. Instead of boasting of their godly ancestry, high privilege as it is, let them remember that regeneration is not of blood, nor of birth, nor of the will of man, but of God, and to them, as to all others, Christ’s words apply, “Ye must be born again.”

Some there are who imagine that they can get to heaven by some special staircase, because they are people of rank. Oh, believe me, Sir John, you will have to be saved in the same way as your groom or not at all! Ah, my lord, everybody bows to you, but you must bow to Christ! You must be saved in the same way as the carpenter, and the blacksmith, and the chimney-sweep, or not at all.

There are no two ways to heaven. Jesus says, “I am *the Way*.” There is no other way for your lordship or your ladyship, despite of your rank. There is a wealthy man who thinks that everything is to be bought, if he can find the price, but you cannot buy heaven, sir. The very stones of the street are of pure gold. You could not buy one of them, you have not money enough. Your wealth goes for nothing in the matter of salvation. You must be saved just in that same way as the poorest of the poor. The pauper who was born in a workhouse, and has never left it, has the same way of salvation as you have, for, “there is no difference” of any sort, whatsoever with regard to birth, or rank, or wealth.

But someone says, “I am a man of great abilities, a man of education, and culture, and learning.” I am very glad to hear of it, my dear sir, but do you expect the Lord is going to make a way of salvation by competitive examination as when people enter the Civil Service? Is there to be a special way of salvation for you Masters of Arts or Doctors of Divinity? It is not so.

The Lord knew that the great bulk of people would be nothing of this sort, so He made a Gospel which is adapted to the poor and is just as suitable for all others. Those who are illiterate can, nevertheless, understand the way of salvation by faith in Christ and so they are saved. And my dear sir, you will have to be saved in the same way or else you will never get to heaven.

I have heard of a king of Sweden who, when he lay dying, had a bishop to pray with him, and when the bishop had finished his prayer, the king said, “Somehow, I have derived no comfort from that prayer. I remember once hearing a shepherd pray in a hut when I had lost my way—will you send for him?” They did so, and when the shepherd poured out his heart in his own simple language, then the king saw the light and died rejoicing. “There is no difference”—the king and the shepherd need the same Savior and must go to heaven by the same royal road. This doctrine dethrones pride, but that is not all that it does.

Further, *it is a great uplifter of those who are troubled with fears.* “Oh!” says one, “I am such a great sinner. I feel that I am the greatest sinner who ever lived.” Ah! my dear friend, but “there is no difference.” You will enter heaven at the same gate through which great saints go in, if you do but trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is what they have to do and so they are saved, and so shall you be.

I think that I hear another say, “But I find such evil in my very nature. I have such a hard heart. I cannot feel, I cannot love the Lord as I want to.” Yes, I know all about it and I am very sorry for you, but my dear friend, “there is no difference.” You believe that there are some Christians who are very tender of spirit, but the Lord had to make them tender and He can make you tender.

The same Lord that saves little children, and that brought a young Josiah, and an open-hearted Lydia to His feet, can bring you also, for there really is no difference. It needed a divine work in their case and it needs the same in yours.

“I am very poor,” says one. Yes, but “there is no difference,” blessed be God! You hardly know where you are going to sleep tonight, but I can tell you where you may rest, not only tonight, but all your days—that is, in Christ Jesus, if you come and put your trust in Him. He does not look to see whether you have a suit of broadcloth or a suit of fustian. “There is no difference” with regard to that matter.

“But I am so ignorant,” says one, “I cannot even read.” I am very sorry for you and I think that you ought to try and learn. At the same time, there is many a man who can read his title clear to a mansion in the skies who does not know A from B. It does not need that you be a scholar in the schools of men to become a scholar in the school of Christ, but just as you are, trust your soul in His hand and He will teach you all that is essential to be known, for in this matter, “there is no difference.”

I thought I heard someone say, very indistinctly, “Ah, sir, but I am so old!” Yes, yes, and I think I hear a little boy or girl over yonder say, “But sir, I am so young.” Well, come along, both of you. Give me your hand, old friend, and give me yours, dear child, for “there is no difference” between the oldest and the youngest as to this way of salvation. The child believes and is saved, and the old man believes with a childlike faith and is saved, too.

My text also has a practical bearing in another direction, *it helps to meet singularity of disposition.* There are many persons in the world who believe that they are different from everybody else. I always sympathize very heartily with them, because I know that I am myself a very odd body, a lot out of all catalogs, I often say, and so are you.

You think there never was another like you. Perhaps you think it is a pity that there should be and very likely that is true. You are all by yourself, you say. Well, just listen to me, for my text can set you right—God grant that it may! After all, “there is no difference.” Come, you strange Jack—you singular Mary—you that seem to be the odd bird in the nest—there is, after all, no difference.

Your heart is evil, your life has been sinful—so has my life been, and so is it with all those round about you. And there is only one way of salvation for you odd people and for all these even people as well. There is not anybody that is so cut on the cross, so strange, and so altogether out of harmony with the rest of mankind that he may say, “God left me out of His calculations.” No, there is really no difference whatever between you and others in this matter of salvation.

I must make yet one more practical use of my text and that is, *to encourage you who labor for Christ.* Where are you going to serve the Master, my brother? “Oh!” you reply, “I have a very tough bit of ground to till. I teach in a Ragged School in Mint Street and I visit the lodging houses.” Another says, “I am trying to do something for Christ in Bethnal Green.”

Well, friend, I reckon that I have about as hard a field of labor as you have. “Oh!” say you, “but these look like very respectable people.” Yes, they look so, but if you could read their hearts, you would see that they are uncommonly like those people in Mint Street and Bethnal Green among whom you are working. “As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.” We all belong to the same race. There is but one blood in all of us, there is the same tendency to sin and the same need of a Savior for these respectable-looking folk as there is for the very roughest and the very dirtiest of mankind.

I think I hear another say, “I am going to Africa as a missionary and I am sometimes afraid as to how I shall get on with the benighted people there.” Another says, “I am going to India and I do not know how I shall succeed with those learned Brahmins.” Another says, “I am going to China. I cannot hope to see many converted among those who are so devoted to Confucianism.”

Why not? “There is no difference.” After all, it is the same sort of soil which we all have to plough either at home or abroad. There may be a slight contrast on the surface, but it all needs the same kind of plowing, the same sort of sowing, and the same divine power to cause the seed to grow. The gate of salvation is just as widely open to men in China as it is to you who have long been sitting under the sound of the Word.

At bottom, “there is no difference” between man and man—they are all sinners, they are all depraved. “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” I believe that it takes as much grace to save an Englishman as it does to save an African.

The grace operates, too, in much the same way. The experience of the two men, when it is related, may sound differently because of the varying measure of knowledge of the parties concerned, yet the essential items of all true Christian experience will be found to be the same in every case. Do not, therefore, say, dear brother, “I shall not go to that place. It is such a difficult sphere.”

I have a notion that such a spot as that is the very best place to which anyone can go. “But there are such crowds of people there.” All the better. It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish. “But oh, they are so wild!” Just so. But if I were ever to go hunting, I would not hunt poor timid hares, I should like to go after lions, and tigers, and bears, and wolves—there is some sense in such sport as that.

And if you go in for soul-winning, do not be picking and choosing which souls you will try to win. The worse the region is, the more it needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I think that if I were a lamp and I could have my choice as to where I would be hung, I should not wish to be in one of the fine streets where there were plenty of other lamps, but I should like to go down some wretched court where there was no lamp at all, where the people break one another’s heads, and steal one another’s goods in the dark, for I should be of more use there.

So, dear friends, be willing to go where you can be of most use. And wherever your sphere of service is, do not be discouraged, for over all men there hangs this motto, “There is no difference.” They have all to be saved in the same way and the omnipotence that can save one will abundantly suffice for the salvation of another.

III. Now, in closing my discourse, I want to spend a minute or two in bidding you REJOICE OVER THIS GREAT TRUTH.

I rejoice over the fact that there is no difference, in the matters of which I have been speaking, *concerning the whole human race*. I saw a picture of the Tower of Babel by an eminent painter. All the various races of mankind were represented as going off in different directions, some to the North, others to the South, to the West, or to the East, all being scattered over the face of the whole earth. It was a painful sight to see the great family broken up, never, as far as we could see, to be reunited again.

But dear friends, hear how this text collects the whole family of mankind into one and gathers all these scattered ears of corn and just makes one sheaf of them—“There is no difference.” All men are fallen through sin, but whosoever out of them all believes in Jesus Christ shall have eternal life. There is one blessed bath of salvation in which all may be washed whiter than snow. There is one remedy, and

only one, for the disease of sin—and all who apply to the great Physician are healed forever. I love to see the human race thus reunited.

But there is something better than that. *What glory it is to the Lord Jesus Christ that He should be the only Savior* and that faith in Him should be the only way of salvation! I feel sure that we do not wish the Lord Jesus Christ to be put into competition with someone else in His work as our Savior. No, we want our Lord to have the monopoly in this matter and He has it.

None can be saved except by faith in Him, by the application of His precious blood, glory be to His holy name! I feel a very peculiar joy over this truth. I was thinking, as I came along to this service, “Suppose I had to preach a different gospel for every man?” There is a little book entitled, *Every Man His Own Lawyer*. Well, nowadays, according to some people, it seems as if every man is to be his own savior.

But if I had, say, a dozen gospels and I had to sort them out and give the right gospel to the right man, what a fix I should be in! I believe that, oftentimes, I should be giving your gospel to someone else and someone else’s gospel to you—and what a muddle it would all be! But now we have one universal cure. We have a divine *catholicon*. The blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will save every man who trusts Him, for “there is no difference.”

Wherever Christ is received, there shall be salvation. This makes it easy work for the preacher and what a blessing it is to you who are believers. For, suppose you had to say, “Well, I have believed in such and such a salvation,” but somebody might say, “That will not save you. You are a No. 2 man and you need No. 2 gospel, not No. 1.”

Suppose you should lay hold of that and one of these days your conscience should say to you, “No. 2 is not the medicine that you want, you ought to have No. 6.” Suppose that it ran up to No. 14, No. 17, or No. 20? Why, when you lay dying, you might say, “I have taken the remedy No. 1, but I am afraid that I am a No. 20 man. I took this one and it did give me some kind of relief, but I am afraid that I took the wrong medicine.”

But now it is one medicine for every disease—one Christ for every sinner—one blood with which to wash us—one salvation with which to rescue us—one righteousness with which to cover us. Therefore, such doubts as I have just mentioned can never come into the minds of those who believe in Jesus—blessed be God for that!

And so to you, dear hearers, who are seeking after Christ, is it not a great mercy that there is but one name whereby you can be saved? Otherwise, the same awkward occurrence might happen to you and you would be saying, “At which door am I to go in?” You might get to the wrong entrance and the man in charge of it might say, “This is not the door for you. You have come to the wrong one, you must go to No. 6, or 7, or 8.”

How puzzled we are when we go to Clapham Junction, or some such railway station, to know which staircase we are to go up—and a poor sinner would be much in the same kind of worry to know which way he was to be saved. But when it is just this, “Believe and be saved; look and live; trust yourself to Christ, rest in His atoning sacrifice, and you are saved”—all can understand it.

When God gives us, by His Spirit, a simple faith in Jesus, we at once receive eternal life, and every soul that believes in Jesus Christ has that life. I pray God to bless this message to you who are still unsaved. Quarrel not with your only hope of salvation. Accept what God provides. Yield yourselves to the divine decree, for God has decreed that no soul shall enter heaven but by His Son, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

This name—this one name—you must rely on if you would be saved. This way—this one way—you must run in if you would enter heaven. God help you to enter it at once, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 3

Verses 1-2. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chief, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

If it be so that, after all, no outward rite or birth privileges can bestow grace, what advantage did the Jews possess? “Why!” says Paul, “they had this very great privilege, ‘that unto them were committed the oracles of God.’” It is no small blessing to have a revelation from JEHOVAH and to have the means of knowing what that revelation really is.

3. *For what if some did not believe?*

Many of the seed of Israel did not believe the revelation that was made to them. Yet the privilege of hearing it was just as great, even though they slighted it.

3-5. *Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?*

Vengeance on a sin which is nevertheless made to turn to His glory?

5-7. *(I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?*

Yet I shall be. If God shall overrule my sin to His own glory, that will make no difference to my responsibility. If I have lied, if I have done wrong in any way, I must be judged and condemned on that account, whatever may be the ultimate result of my sin.

8. *And not rather, (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

If any man dares to say that, “Since God turns even evil into good, and by the forgiveness of sin brings glory to Himself, ‘Let us do evil that good may come,’” he is twisting the truth to his own destruction and his “damnation is just.”

9. *What then? are we better than they?*

Are Jews better than Gentiles? Or are Gentiles better than Jews?

9. *No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

Nobody can read the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans and follow it by reading the second, without seeing how completely Paul has proved “that they are all under sin.”

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

There is not, and there never has been, one of the human race, save our Lord, who also is God, who ever continued to live a righteous life. Adam commenced righteously, but how soon he fell. And all his descendants have both commenced and continued to be sinners. “There is none righteous, no, not one.”

11. *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

That is, none do so by nature—those who seek after God are led to do so by a work of grace upon their hearts. Otherwise, men are blind, they do not see the right path. They are willful and do not seek after God.

12. *They are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

This is God’s verdict upon the whole human race. He has the best opportunity of seeing them and He has the best capacity for judging them. And this is what He says of all men as they are by nature, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

13. *Their throat is an open sepulchre;*

A reeking mass of corruption;

13. *With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:*

They are pleased to say a bad word about their neighbor. They are eager to repeat any slander that they hear and they are not unwilling even to invent it themselves.

14-15. *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood:*

And when, by fear of the laws of the land, they are prevented from carrying out their evil purposes, yet their anger is itself murder in intent—and into what human heart has not that sin glanced?

16-19. *Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:*

All these passages, which Paul has put together in this dreadful mosaic, are taken from the Old Testament, so they apply to the Jews. And he had already proved, in the first chapter, the intolerable vice of the Gentiles, so that now he has shown that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty.

19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

The nineteenth century world, as well as the world of the first century—all the world, in all time, has “become guilty before God.”

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:*

Talk not, therefore, of righteousness by your own works. Dream not of meriting eternal life by any attempt to keep the law, for this is the declaration of God’s Holy Spirit, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:”

20. *For by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The law is a looking-glass—you see your spots as you gaze into it. But no man ever washed his face in a looking-glass—it shows the spots, but it cannot remove them. The law is the indicator and the revealer of sin, but it has no power whatever to put away sin.

21-24. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

That is a very wonderful verse, every word of it is full of meaning. “Justified”—that is, accounted just, made to be righteous in the sight of God. “Justified freely”—without any merit or purchase money. “Freely by his grace”—not an act of justice, but an act of mercy has made sinners just in the sight of God. “Through the redemption”—there is the foundation of it all—we are redeemed by precious blood. “Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

25-27. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then?*

Boasting is sure to be somewhere handy, ready to creep in if it can, for we are all prone to it—it is the common sin of our race. “Where is boasting then?”

27. *It is excluded. By what law?*

It is shut out. But by what law is it shut out?

27. *Of works?*

No, for whenever we think that we have been performing any good works, we begin to boast at once.

27. *Nay, but by the law of faith.*

For if we are saved by believing, if we are justified freely by God’s grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, then there is no room for boasting.

28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

“We conclude”—we are shut up to this belief, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

29. *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:*

He saved Abraham by faith and he saves us by faith. The same saving principle is applicable to all parts of the human race.

30-31. *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith?*

Some will be sure to say so, but it is not true.

31. *God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

There is no one who so much loves the law of God and delights in it after the inward man, as the one who is justified by faith. There is nothing that so honors the law as “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” It establishes forever the law, even as Christ said to His disciples, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all is fulfilled.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—397, 534, 549

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